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SNAPSHOT

OF CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEMS OF

SOUTH KOREA



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Program information

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The Centre of Excellence was established with funding from Global Affairs Canada and IDRC and contributes directly to the work of the Global Financing Facility, a key financing platform of the UN Secretary General's Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health.

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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide a brief introduction to the civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) system in the Republic of Korea.

The information was based on a case study of South Korea, published in *The Nexus between Civil Registration and Social Protection Systems: Five Country Practices*. It is further supplemented with other findings from the desk review of available documents and other resources. Among other things, this report presents:

- Background information on the country;
- Selected indicators relevant to CRVS improvement;
- Stakeholders' activities; and
- Resources available and needed to strengthen CRVS systems.

Brief country profile

South Korea is located in East Asia, constituting the southern part of the Korean Peninsula and sharing a land border with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

South Korea is made up of 17 first-tier administrative divisions: 6 metropolitan cities, 1 special city, 1 special autonomous city, and 9 provinces, including 1 special autonomous province. These are further subdivided into a variety of smaller entities, including cities, counties, districts, towns, townships, neighbourhoods, and villages.



Disclaimer: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

- Land area: 100,363 km²
- Population: 51,635,256¹ with an estimated annual growth rate of 0.3 percent.² In 2018, 81 percent of the population resided in urban areas,³ with the remaining 19 percent in rural areas.
- Capital city: Seoul
- Official working language: Korean
- Authority responsible for civil registration: Supreme Court of Korea
- Civil registration agencies: Local government authorities
- National statistical office: Statistics Korea (KOSTAT)



CRVS dimensions

Births	
Completeness of birth registration	100% (2014) ⁴
Children under 5 years of age whose births were reported as registered	100% (2014) ⁵
Births attended by skilled health personnel	100% (2015) ⁶
Women aged 15–49 who received antenatal care from a skilled provider	98.1% (2015) ⁷
DPT1 immunization coverage among 1-year-olds	98% (2018) ⁸
Crude birth rate (per 1,000 population)	5.9 (2019) ⁹
Total fertility rate (live births per woman)	0.9 (2019) ¹⁰
Adolescent fertility rate (per 1,000 girls aged 15–19 years)	1 (2017) ¹¹
Population under age 15	16% (2012) ¹²
Deaths	
Completeness of death registration	99% (2011) ¹³
Crude death rate (per 1,000 population)	5.7 (2019) ¹⁴
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	2.8 (2018) ¹⁵
Under 5 mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	3.2 (2018) ¹⁶
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births)	11 (2017) ¹⁷
Marriages and divorces	
Marriage registration rate	5 (2018) ¹⁸
Women aged 20–24 first married or in union before age 15	Not available
Women aged 20–24 first married or in union before age 18	Not available
Divorce registration rate	2.1 (2018) ¹⁹
Vital statistics including causes of death data	
Compilation and dissemination of civil registration-based statistics	Available
Medically certified causes of death	Available

Civil registration system

Legislative framework

South Korea's CRVS system is governed by a range of laws and regulations. There are

- constitutional statutes;
- legislative laws; and
- decrees (presidential decrees) and enforcement rules or regulations (ministerial decrees).

Korea's CRVS system consists of two major parts: the civil registration part and the vital statistics part. Civil registration, in turn, consists of the two distinct but closely related components: the Family Relations Registration System and the Resident Registration System. The Population Change Survey manages the vital statistics portion.

CRVS-related legislation includes:

- *Act on the Registration of Family Relations (2014)*;²⁰
- *Resident Registration Act (2016)*;²¹
- *Statistics Act*;²² and
- Regulation for Population Change Survey.

Other legislation supports CRVS processes and regulates digital record keeping and processing of registered data, such as the:

- *Electronic Government Act*;²³ and
- *Personal Information Protection Act*.²⁴

Management, organization, and operations

CRVS systems are managed by three authorities:

- Family relations registration is managed by the Supreme Court of Korea;
- Resident registration is managed by the Ministry of the Interior and Safety; and
- The Population Change Survey (vital statistics) is overseen by Statistics Korea.

These authorities are responsible for planning, developing, and managing the national database system, and for monitoring and evaluating the national systems as a whole. At the local level, registration and processing of registered information is done at city, county, and district offices, and at community service centres.

The Supreme Court manages the registration of establishment and change of family relations and certification. It also operates the Central Computerized Information Office.

Statistics Korea coordinates and maintains statistical matters and develops ways to expand the collection, dissemination, and use of statistics.

Metropolitan authorities provide advice on vital events registration. They also approve the use of computer processing information among related entities within their jurisdiction. City, county, and district authorities register vital events data and report records to higher authorities. Community service centres also register vital events data and forward registered records to higher authorities.

National CRVS systems coordination mechanisms

There is no government-wide coordination committee for institutional, managerial, and technological changes in CRVS systems.

Administrative-level registration centres

Direct service to citizens is provided at 226 city, county, and district offices (Si/Gun/Gu), and at 3,560 community service centres (Eup/Myeon/Dong). City, county, and district offices are responsible for maintaining continuity and consistency of CRVS information by synchronizing family relations registration and resident registration data (*Resident Registration Act*, Article 15).

Accessibility of civil registration services

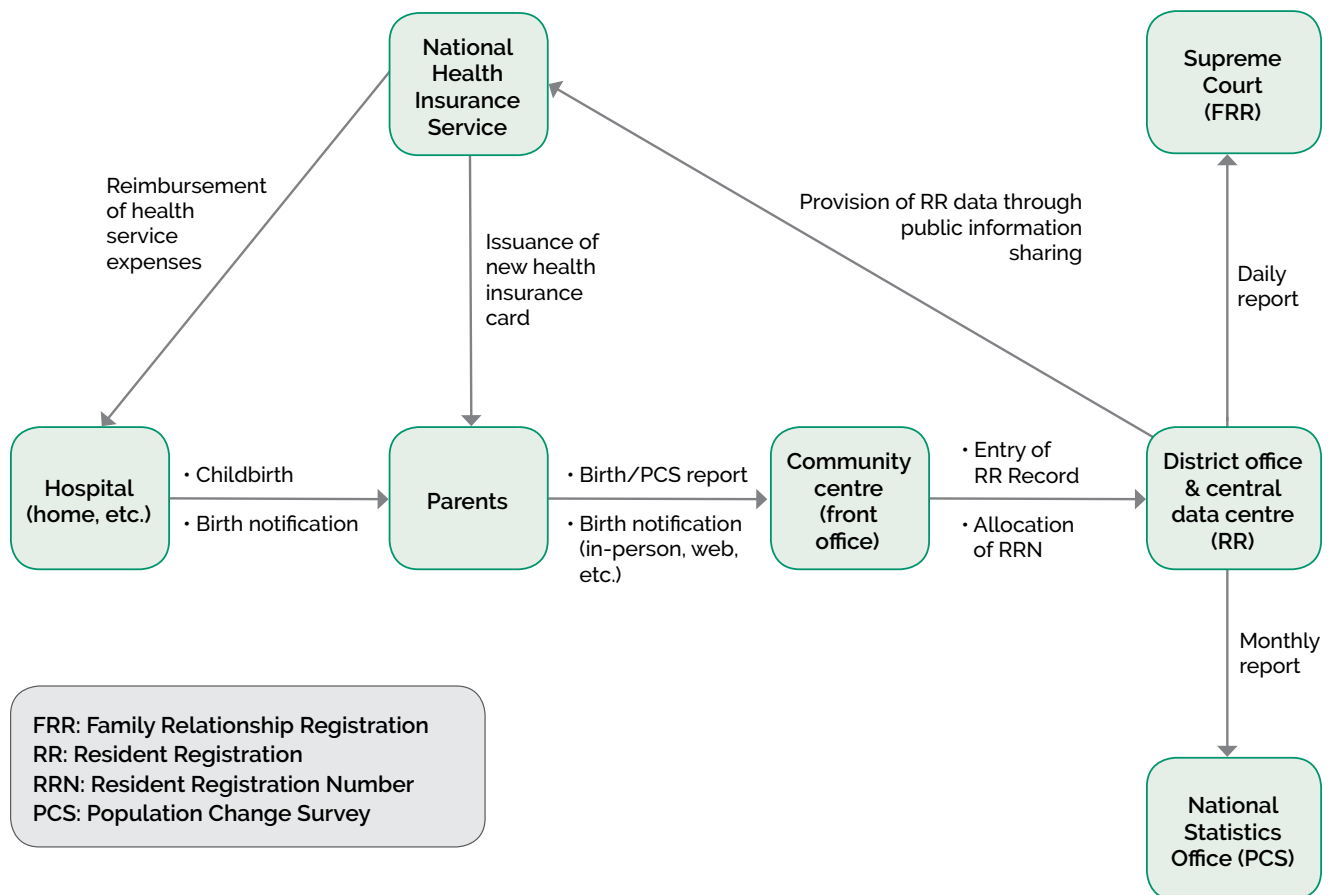
Citizens can access civil registration services in person and online at any city or county office and community service centres irrespective of citizens' current residence.

Registration of vital events

The Family Relationship Registration System is intended to confirm family links between individuals. This link is legally established in the process to register vital events such as birth, death, marriage, divorce, and adoption. The system also caters for the important function of death registration.

Parents must complete the **birth registration** of their child within 30 days of the birth with a certificate of live birth, or birth notification, issued by a doctor at the community service centre for the birth address (the parents' current address). When a birth report is entered into the Family Relationship Registration System, the infant receives a unique and permanent Resident Registration Number. The infant is then recorded as a household member of the parents in the regional Family Relationship Registration and Resident Register databases. The birth registration process is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Birth registration process.



Death registration is done by a household member, caretaker, or head of the community. The registration is done at the location of death within one month after the death. Informants are required to present either a doctor's death certificate or a post-mortem examination certificate to the relevant city office or community centre of the location of death, burial, or cremation.

To complete **marriage registration** or **divorce registration**, the parties involved need to report to a relevant Family Relationship Registration office. The declaration form has questions about the name, family clan, date of birth, Resident Registration Number, and location of registration of the persons involved, as well as the name, location of registration, and Resident Registration Numbers of his or her parents.

Sample registration forms

Birth registration form: unstats.un.org/unsd/vitalstatkb/KnowledgebaseArticle51044.aspx?Keywords=kore

Death registration form: unstats.un.org/unsd/vitalstatkb/KnowledgebaseArticle51040.aspx?Keywords=korea

Marriage registration form: unstats.un.org/unsd/vitalstatkb/KnowledgebaseArticle51041.aspx

Divorce registration form: unstats.un.org/unsd/vitalstatkb/KnowledgebaseArticle51042.aspx

Registration fee

There is no registration fee charged to any person who is obliged to report a birth, death, marriage, or divorce, or change of domicile. However, an administrative fine not exceeding \$55 (50,000 KRW) shall be imposed on a person who fails to file a report within the specified period of time without good cause (within 30 days for birth, death, marriage, and divorce by the *Act on the Registration of Family Relationship*, and 14 days for a change of

domicile by the *Resident Registration Act*). A person filing a false report shall be punished by penalties or fines of more than \$55 (50,000 KRW).

Vital statistics system

Vital statistics

The Population Change Survey Regulation is the main instrument for compiling monthly changes of the population. The Population Change Survey is a national statistics survey. Every month, it collects data on births, deaths, marriages, and divorces from the Family Relationship Registration System, where citizens register vital events.

The Population Change Survey, a key component of vital statistics, is a national statistical survey based on the Family Relationship Registration System data. Statistics Korea integrates the batch data of the Population Change Survey collected by local governments and makes the data public monthly. The Family Relationship Registration, Resident Registration, and the Population Change Survey interrelate with each other in terms of subject of registration, overseeing authority, registration address, and register books.

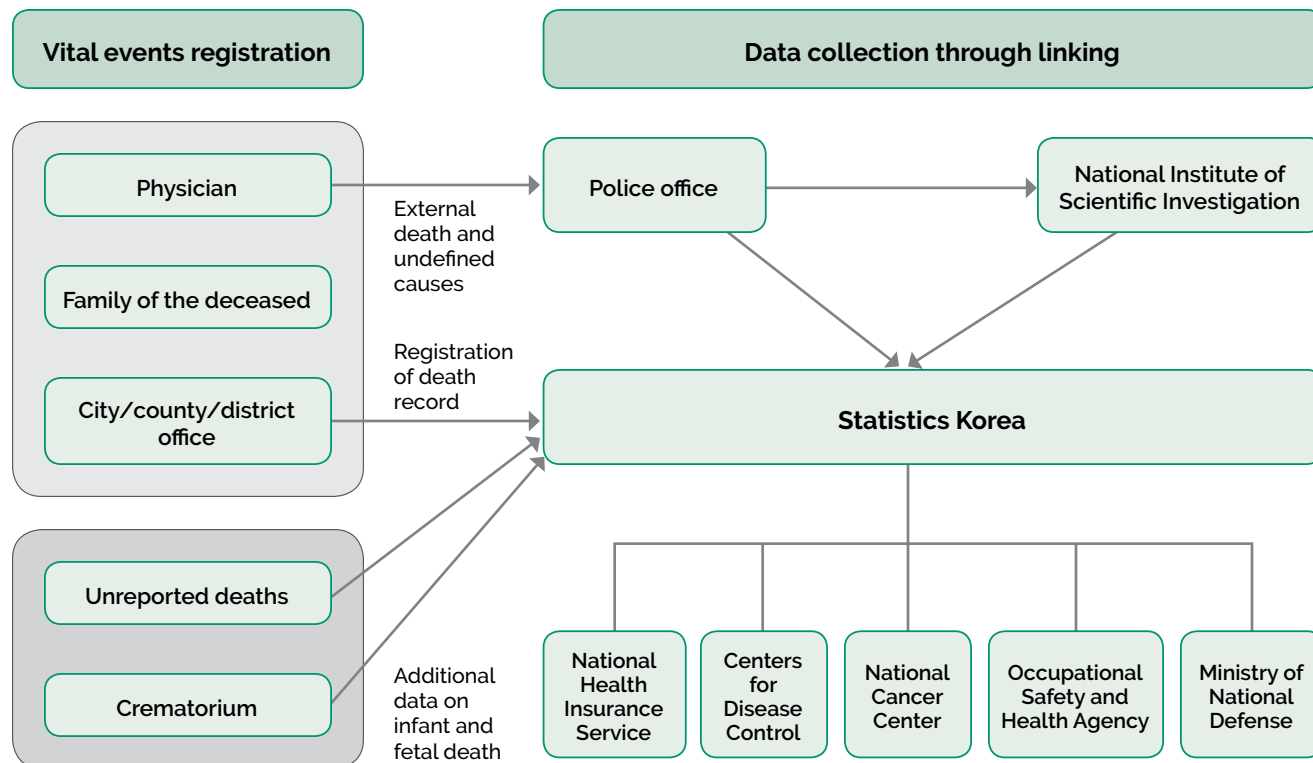
Causes of death

Population Change Survey items in the death report include details on

- the cause and type of death;
- region and location of the event;
- whether an accident is cited as a cause of death;
- nationality; and
- the highest level of education of the deceased.

The data processing approach used by Statistics Korea for the cause of death is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Data processing of the cause of death by Statistics Korea.



Source: Vital Statistics Division, Statistics Korea, 2016

The law provides an obligation to report cause of death and to use the Family Relationship Registration System as a source of cause-of-death information. The ICD-10 standard is in use and health authorities provide both regular and ad hoc training to health practitioners on their use. Causes of death data captured in the Civil Registration System is cross-referenced with other health data information.

Digitization

South Korea's CRVS system is fully computerized. Registration and processing of registered information is done in digital format. Certification of registered information is possible either in paper or digital format. The digitization of the CRVS system began in 1987 after the government initiated the National Basic Information System

Projects for computerizing five national key networks: administration, defence, public security, finance and banking, and education and research. This process has resulted in a sound civil management information system that consists of databases closely linked to the Family Relationship Registration, Resident Registration, real estate registration, automobile registration, population statistics, employment, and customs systems.

Computerization

The Supreme Court of Korea completed computerization of the Family Relationship Registration System in 2007. The system was built as a web portal at the registration offices. The system's data processing and main database are operated by the Supreme Court. With appropriate access credentials, registration officials can

complete registrations online through the system website. In 2008, interoperability was achieved with the Ministry of Justice and in 2011 with the Ministry of the Interior and Safety, which enabled linking personal data between the Family Relationship Registration System and the Resident Registration System. Since 2013, interoperability between the two systems has enabled the viewing, issuing, reporting, and requesting of various Family Relationship Registration services. Examples of these services are verification of birth, death, marriage, and adoption through the Family Relationship Registration System of the Supreme Court and the **GOV.KR** (new version of Minwon24) portal website of the Ministry of the Interior and Safety.

Computer use is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Computer use in CRVS.

Computers used in	Yes	No
Registration offices (city, county, and district offices)	X	
Community service centres	X	
Health facilities		X

Registration services at health facilities

Other than providing a medical certificate that is later used by informants in birth and death registration, health facilities do not have a specific role in birth and death registration.

Mobile technology application

Mobile technologies are not used for civil registration processes.

Unique identification number

The Resident Registration Number is a registration number that the government issues to uniquely identify each citizen (*Resident Registration Act*, Article 7). This number is printed on the Resident Registration Card, which is the national identity card used to verify a cardholder's identity and residency. This number is issued by local authorities following first registration of place of residence. It is designed to be used by and associated with a specific person for their entire life.

The Resident Registration Number was introduced in 1968. It initially consisted of 12 digits: a regional number (six digits), sex (one digit), and personal serial number (five digits). It was modified in 1975 to consist of 13 digits, indicating birth date (six digits), sex (one digit), regional code for the place of original registration (four digits), reported order (one digit), and error verification number (one digit). This 13-digit system is still in use today.

Due to its structure, the Resident Registration Number reveals specific personal data. The *Resident Registration Act* imposes severe punishment ranging from fine to imprisonment to any person who

- attempts to fabricate a Resident Registration Number;
- discloses information on a third person's Resident Registration Number for profit-making purposes in violation of the Acts and subordinate statutes; or
- uses a third person's Resident Registration Number illegally.

Integrated databases

The Supreme Court of Korea manages the Family Relationship Registration database. The backup database is located at the Judicial Archives Center of the Supreme Court. Similarly, a copy of the Residents Register database, maintained by the Ministry of the Interior and Safety, is kept at the National Computing and Information Service data centres, which are under the authority of the same ministry.

Within the Supreme Court, the National Court Administration manages individual family relationship registration tasks while the Judicial Archives Center manages the information system. Electronic family relationship registration services are provided through the Family Relationship Registration web portal efamily.scourt.go.kr, which is maintained by information system centres in city offices, community service centres, and consulates abroad (such as in Tokyo, Osaka, and Fukuoka in Japan), which are supervised by 56 heads of the local Family Court.

All individual information systems are interoperable and integrated through the Administrative Information Sharing System Platform. This platform is also used by other government services for verifying identity data in the process of service delivery. For this purpose, identity data is served primarily by the Resident Registration System, which is updated on a permanent basis with new layers of identity data as new vital events are registered in the Family Relationship Registration System. With such characteristics, South Korea's Resident Registration System is very similar to population registers operated by many countries.

The National Computing and Information Service was introduced in 2007 to address the problem of increased fragmentation of information and computer technology equipment and software technologies. These technologies operated in silos and did not adhere to the government-wide

established standards. As a result, data was duplicated or not up to date, which increased the costs of maintaining these systems. The National Computing and Information Service resolved these problems by co-locating all information resources operated by different government agencies. It operates 22 information systems of central government agencies in each of its two data centres with a real-time mutual backup scheme. It serves as the national core facility that operates the integrated information system and national information network, and handles external cyberattacks by using cutting-edge technology.

This transformation began in 2005 by integrating management and physically co-locating 44 ministries' information systems, which was completed in 2007. From 2008 to 2012, the focus was on hardware consolidation and integration of infrastructure resources while reinforcing network security. Finally, since 2013, the system has been shifting toward the use of cloud computing and the latest interoperability protocols.

Digitization of historical civil registration records

All vital event records of the live population are available in digital format.

Link with identification system

The Resident Registration System is a national identification system that aims to confirm people's residential status and migration by registering residents living in a certain place for more than a month. Identity data in the Resident Registration System is permanently synchronized with identity data in the Family Relationship Registration System. Whenever a new vital event is registered and a new layer of identity data is recorded in a personal record in the Family Relationship Registration System, that information is shared with the Resident Registration System, which updates the personal record accordingly.

The Resident Registration Card is the national identity card that verifies a cardholder's residency. It has universal usages of verifying a resident's identity for a wide range of activities, including voting, commercial transactions, and social welfare transfers. The front side of the Resident Registration Card contains the individual's name, photo, Resident Registration Number, and address, while the reverse side contains a fingerprint (right thumb) and space for changes in address.

Interface with other sectors and operations

The Resident Registration System provides core information for common use and reference among administrative agencies through the Administrative Information Sharing System. Local government pays a number of childbirth subsidies and childcare benefits. The GOV24 system provides people with convenient access to one-stop services for all births.

The following are examples of administrative activities and public services linked to the Resident Registration System:

- Newborns: Resident Registration Number, birth subsidies, and benefits;
- Children: Vaccination notices for infants, childcare fees support, notice of elementary school enrolment (at age 7);
- Teenagers: Notice of middle and high school enrolment (age 13), national ID card (over age 17);
- Youth: Permission to vote in elections (over age 19), opening of bank accounts and mobile phone subscription, transmission of high school records to colleges;

- Adults: Employment (health insurance, pension, employment insurance, etc.), notification of taxes owed, house leasing for the poor; and
- Seniors: Payment of national pension, medical care service, free transit pass.

Parents with preschool-age children receive notices about these services from the local government with jurisdiction over their resident registration data. Parents of school-age children (primary and secondary school) receive these notices from the local education office. Adults (ages 20 and up) receive them from the local government. Life-cycle services end when

- a death is registered in the Family Relationship Registration System of the relevant community centre; or
- a cohabiter or caretaker reports the death within a month after learning of it, using a doctor's death notification or a post-mortem examination certificate.

The local government must make the relevant addition, correction, and deletion on the Resident Registration records after receiving a report of a resident's death via the Family Relationship Registration System. The information on the death is sent online to all agencies in charge of inheritance, social insurance, commercial transactions, and other relevant services.

Improvement initiatives and external support

Improvement plan and budget

Strategic plan

Until 2015, CRVS system reforms were implemented in a series of strategic plans focusing on digitization of the system, improving the efficiency of specific CRVS business processes, and improving data sharing.

The strategic plan was implemented from 1987 to 2005 in two phases. In the first phase, by 1996 a wide-area service of CRVS was begun through a public information-sharing network. During this period, national basic information systems concerning civil services, real estate, education, and research were completed. This made automatization within government offices as well as remote operations possible. In the second phase, by 2005 the high-speed broadband project, initiated in 1995, furnished the whole country with high-speed Internet. It was fully completed in 2014.

The first e-Government agenda was implemented from 2001 to 2007 and resulted in the Government for Citizens project (G4C) that was linked to five core national databases on residential information, real estate, automobiles, and so forth. This effectively reduced the number of required physical visits to government offices and eliminated a lot of documentation related to public services that was previously required.

The second e-Government agenda implemented 31 projects, including digitization of all document processing, informatization of national and local government finances, and sharing of administrative information.

The third e-Government agenda was the Administrative Information Sharing System (AISS) project, which involved online verification by sharing information provided through the administrative databases of multiple administration agencies compared to paper documents submitted in person or by mail.

The fourth agenda, which is still in progress (2008 to present), involves upgrading South Korea's e-Government information system. This phase aims to improve information sharing by integrating and connecting information systems, and by ensuring stable operations at the National Computing and Information Service. Efforts are also being made to provide customized CRVS services using technologies such as mobile, the Internet of Things, and cloud computing.

Budgetary allocations and requirements

CRVS is seen as one of the key government systems that is essential for efficient public governance. Therefore, it is financed by a government budget to ensure its smooth operation and to provide strategic upgrades to increase efficiency and meet future demands.

Activities identified as high priorities

Because multisector strategic reforms over the past three decades have achieved almost universal registration rates, South Korea has not developed a multisectoral national CRVS strategy since 2015, other than strategic investments in upgrading information processing infrastructure.

Support from development partners

Components of the CRVS system are financed from the government budget and special budgetary projects approved by the government.

Conclusion

Korean authorities very early recognized the importance of civil registration in ensuring quality of services to the population. Universal registration of vital events enabled the Resident Registration System to operate at any given point of time with the most up-to-date identity information of citizens. The accuracy of identity data is ensured across a wide range of other government systems that operate with personal data and that verify this information or obtain it from the Resident Registration System. With an elaborate registration framework in place, vital statistics can be extracted mostly from the Family Relationship Registration System, either on an ongoing basis or frequently within any given year. The system's success is a consequence of awareness and political engagement of high-level decision-makers. Interministerial collaboration and government-wide policies have resulted in the needed budgetary support and allocation of human resources and information and computer technology resources.



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